

# The Navy and the Defense Logistics Information Service

By Connie White and Debra Meyer

## History

The history of the Defense Logistics Information Service (DLIS), formerly known as the Defense Logistics Services Center (DLSC), is intertwined with the Federal Catalog System (FCS), which began in 1914 when the Navy first published a Naval Depot Supply and Stock Catalog. At the time, this catalog was the nearest thing to a uniform federal stock catalog — perhaps that is why it became the Federal Standard Stock Catalog in 1929.

During World War II, an enormous number of new items came into the military supply system. This influx often created duplication, lack of uniformity, and inefficiency because each military Service had its own methods of identifying, classifying and numbering its supply items. President Roosevelt recognized the costly duplication and the danger to both national security and the economy, so in 1945 he instructed the Bureau of the Budget to prepare and maintain a U. S. Standard Commodity Catalog. Several laws concerning government cataloging passed since then. The Defense Cataloging and Standardization Act of 1952, Public Law 436 was added in 1952 to establish the FCS.

In December 1961, the Department of Defense announced the change from the Armed Forces Supply Support Center (implemented in 1958) to the new DLSC and established the new organization in Battle Creek, Mich. Throughout its history DLSC continually evolved and transformed to better meet the needs of modern military logistics. The name itself changed from DLSC to the DLIS in 1998 to better reflect the expanded mission of providing logistics information through a wide variety of new media to supply the most current and accurate data possible to support the Services. Key to such efforts has been the DLIS commitment to keep pace with technological developments. At the same time, the appetite for new information and the dominant role it places in logistics has grown dramatically. Meeting those information requirements has led DLIS to develop new systems, use new media, and literally extend our reach around the world.

The decision to begin centralizing Defense cataloging in Battle Creek in 2000 was a milestone event in the DLIS evolution. Today, the FCS has matured into the source of standard logistics data used throughout the supply chain, primarily organized by National Stock Numbers (NSN). The numbers serve essentially as the DNA of materiel management — the key to information needed for acquisition, financial management, demilitarization, hazardous material, freight, packaging, risk of pilferage, etc. Such systems rely on the NSN-related data to make automated decisions about stockage and reordering.

The NSN is simply an official label (whose creation is restricted,



*Susie Daugherty, a general supply specialist at the Defense Logistics Information Service, checks information for an outlet strip used by the Navy against information in the Logistics Remote Users Network.*

by law, to DLIS). These items may be manufactured by scores of different companies, but if the item is ordered by NSN, one can be confident that the parts will work as expected. The NSN has official recognition by the U.S. government, as well as many foreign governments. Each number is the result of a careful review process called "item entry control." Cataloging can be viewed as the blending of a myriad of data about an item, including its name, manufacturing data (such as manufacturer's name and reference number), price, physical and performance characteristics, etc.

## Cataloging Directorate - DLIS-K

This directorate is the hub of cataloging.

Virtually everything useful to know about an item is collected and encoded by cataloging technicians in DLIS-K and entered into the DLIS computer system. The system then assigns the next available number, and a new NSN is born. There are approximately 7 million active NSNs. Catalogers perform maintenance on the database to reflect ongoing changes such as price, item management, manufacturer changes, etc. The NSN has wrought savings through inventory reduction and reduced acquisition costs. It assists inventory managers in budget reviews and the tracking of expenditures for supplies. The NSN supports readiness by answering the question, "What supplies exist where?" Its claim to fame is that it is the best tool ever invented to answer that question. Because an NSN so precisely identifies an item, it can be used to search automated systems worldwide in mere minutes.

## Navy Cataloging - DLIS-KBN

The Navy Cataloging Division, DLIS-KBN, is the cataloging center for the Naval Inventory Control Points (NAVICPs). The division is comprised of an Air Section (DLIS-KBNA), which services NAVICP Philadelphia; and a Sea Section, (DLIS-KBNB) which supports NAVICP Mechanicsburg. Both sections provide services for the Navy's management of supply items such as Emergency National Stock Number assignments, maintenance actions for user information, classification and naming, characteristics and reference numbers, supply support request processing, and cataloging collaboration requests processing.

Both the DLIS Air and Sea offices are dedicated to providing logistics management data and services in support of the Navy by partnering with the Navy and industry early on in the acquisition process to establish NSNs and associated logistics data. This support continues during the sustainment phase with DLIS insuring ongoing data quality and maintenance support to the Navy. Additionally, the Air Section executes the Navy's Defense Inactive Item Program (DIIP) Focal Point duties.

The program was established to systematically consider inactive

items for elimination from the supply system when there is a high probability that no future requirements will occur. Items are identified and considered for elimination annually. For an item to be a DIIP candidate, it must be in the supply system or the Master Data File for at least seven years; have no demand for the past five years; have been under the Integrated Materiel Manager's (IMM's) cognizance for two years; and must have been under the IMM's cognizance for one year following the previous inactive item review. One Service or all can ask for an item to be removed. If all users request removal, the item becomes inactive and removed from the Federal Logistics Information System (FLIS).

The Sea Section prepares the Navy Afloat Shopping Guide (ASG). The guide is tailored to Navy afloat supply items. It contains more than 28,000 NSNs and 2,000 graphics. It is a valuable tool used to assist fleet personnel in identifying common shipboard or shore-based items in an easy to read format. It is distributed to over 3,000 recipients. The guide uses cataloging technical information and informally describes the items for everyday use by Sailors, storekeepers, shipbuilders and maintenance personnel. It contains information on critical Navy programs such as Buy Our Spares Smart, Plastic Removal in the Marine Environment, Level 1 Fasteners, Navy Habitability Equipment Program and Hazardous Material Control Office. The ASG consists of three volumes and is available in hardcopy, online and compact disc. It is published annually.

### DoD EMALL

The Department of Defense Electronic MALL, known as DoD EMALL, is a single entry point for buyers to find and acquire commercial-off-the-shelf goods from suppliers and government sources. The Naval Supply Systems Command (NAVSUP), Mechanicsburg, Pa., entered into a partnership with DLA during February 2002 to use DoD EMALL as the online hosting and ordering system to support Navy Purchase Card users. To date, the Navy Fleet and Industrial Supply Centers (FISC) have added more than 289 commercial catalogs in support of historical Purchase Card buying patterns to meet the Navy's needs. Users can access DoD EMALL through One Touch Support (OTS) using a single sign-on.

EMALL provides a number of benefits such as reduced prices through negotiation with the vendor for discounted prices that more closely match wholesale rather than retail. Secondly, the customer will often see competition on commercial items. The customer can identify mandatory source items such as those that must be obtained from Javits-Wagner-O'Day (JWOD) suppliers. The customer can also see Material Safety Data Sheets for hazardous items, if included by the supplier. Finally, customers are provided the convenience of online ordering, rather than the inconvenience of driving from store-to-store or calling vendors. Navy One Touch Support offering an initial 75 Navy commercial catalogs will be available through the Defense Medical Logistics Standard Support (DMLSS) sites. This data, previously provided on compact disc, is now provided to DMLSS sites via Extensible Markup Language, or XML-enabled Web Services.

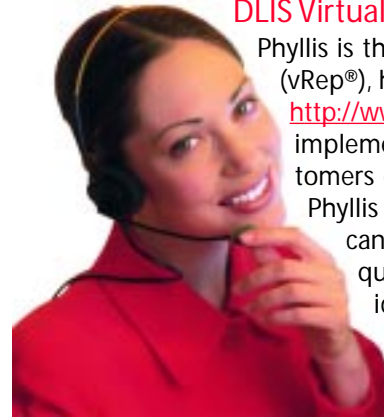
### The DLIS Battle Creek Customer Contact Center (BCCCC)

This center is a unique partnership of government and private industry dedicated to supporting the Armed Forces in war or

peace. This partnership has led to the creation of a Customer Contact Center that exceeds world-class standards for customer service.

As the Global War on Terrorism was taken to the mountains of Afghanistan, warfighter calls to the BCCCC increased dramatically. In one instance, an Air Force C-5 aircraft was grounded in Spain due to a ruptured hydraulic line. In less than four hours, customer agents were able to resolve the issue so that the aircraft could continue its mission. Numerous calls for support from all military Services were also received as weapon systems pounded suspected terrorist strongholds.

### DLIS Virtual Representative



Phyllis is the DLIS Virtual Representative (vRep®), hosted on the DLIS Web site; <http://www.dla.mil/dlis>, this service was implemented on May 21, 2001. Customers can ask questions as though Phyllis were a human agent. Phyllis can answer common or most frequently asked questions (FAQs) identified from an analysis of past customer contact responses. She provides the unique capability to help a customer navigate through

layers of Web pages to locate the information they need by simply responding to a question phrased in natural language.

In addition, Phyllis has been successfully linked to several DLIS databases that provide a customer with the unique ability to ask a question and have the vRep® search the appropriate database for a response. Example questions are: What is the FSC 5820? What data is available for NSN XYZ? What is the CAGE Code for General Motors? Who is CAGE Code 80063? Phyllis can also provide suggested topics identifying to the customer what she knows about a given topic. A comical example is to ask her "Is CCR a rock band?" She will provide a list of what she knows regarding CCR, also known as Central Contract Registration.

The future of the vRep® is wide open. We are constantly evaluating customers' needs through telephone conversation logs and building the knowledge base. Additionally, the level of expertise we have achieved in vRep® development and management could be successfully expanded throughout the entire DLA organization.

As a field activity of the Defense Logistics Agency, DLIS creates, obtains, manages and integrates data from several sources. It shares this data through user-friendly products and services that support logistics operations throughout DoD, other federal agencies and elements of the private sector. DLIS expertise in cataloging and information management makes it an important contributor to electronic commerce between the U.S. government and its many suppliers. For additional information about DLIS, visit <http://www.dla.mil/dlis> or call (269) 961-7019.

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